

THE 8 PURPOSES OF S-E-X (AND WHY THEY'RE NOT WHAT YOU THINK)

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Ryan: A few weeks back, we talked about why a husband should be the primary initiator in sex. If you haven't heard those episodes, we encourage you to go back and check those out. I think we made a pretty compelling argument. Leadership is squarely on the husband's shoulders. The word "headship" is a biblical one and it comes with all kinds of baggage. And leadership is one of those things. And we believe that that should permeate the entirety of a couple's life for their good. It's for their health and it's for the glory of God. It's a very beautiful, wonderful thing.

But then we, as we were talking about it, we had this question, or actually we kind of in passing said, "Hey, there's all these purposes." So if you don't detach... so excuse me, if you detach the purposes of sex from it, then it becomes like this, "Oh, I just want the physicality of it. I want the physical act of it."

Selena: Right?

Ryan: But the only way that husband initiating makes sense that us having two podcast episodes dedicated to that, the only reason that makes sense is if you have in view these - what? - I think eightfold purposes. And there's probably more. There's ways to pull it apart, but there's different purposes for sex. The things that it accomplishes, the things that as a couple we can hope to gain by-

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: ...by having a healthy sex life. So today we are dedicating to... what are we dedicating? Dedicating it to Selena.

Selena: Talking-

Ryan: The purposes of sex.

Selena: The purposes. I was like, no.

Ryan: So yeah. We'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:22] <music>

Selena: I feel like we've talked about this like thousands of times. But when I went back to actually search for "purposes of sex", we've never actually named an episode or like had a talk. We've written about it, we've talked around it, we've talked about it, probably misnamed it something different, but-

Ryan: What do you mean?

Selena: I'm very surprised by myself, [laughs] by ourselves that we did not already have this type of episode out there.

Ryan: And there's different kind of angles you take on, like, what's the grand purpose of it, what are the spiritual purposes of it? But I think today we're gonna touch on those two things, which to me are the most kind of obvious ones and then we're gonna get into some really granular purposes that I think are freeing. I know when I had this conversation, so this came out of a conversation back way back when we first kind of formulated these that I had with a good friend.

He was going through the scriptures and I was just like, "You are so right. That either... when you go to your spouse for sex, it's not one-dimensional. There's multiple reasons you would go to one another. And the things you think of first are the most obvious ones. Those are just the beginning of a journey.

Selena: Which is so beautiful.

Ryan: Yeah, it's very beautiful. Just like you, my lovely wife. This is-

Selena: That's so sweet. I was gonna say, if you don't know any of us yet-

Ryan: Any of us. All of us.

Selena: ...just keep wondering. Just keep wondering well get to it.

Ryan: If you don't all of us, my name's Ryan. This is my lovely wife Selena. We are the Fredericks. We do The Fierce Marriage Podcast. We also have written a number of books. Go to fiercemarriage.com and check those out. It's actually shop.fiercemarriage.com. We have a number of books on pursuit and praying with and for one another. We have books on communication which those are our latest ones. We're currently working on books on manhood and womanhood. I'm excited for that. What are you calling yours? Lovely Ladies? [laughs]

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: Vote in the comments if you want Selena to name her book Lovely Ladies.

Selena: It's too-

Ryan: It's not that.

Selena: It's going to that song that has... that's-

Ryan: Les Mis. Lovely Ladies. [laughs]

Selena: No, I was thinking... Oh gosh. I was thinking not that Lovely Lady Lumps. [laughs]

Ryan: Oh yeah. Well, Fergie-

Selena: The more secular song.

Ryan: They're mysterious.

Selena: They're mysterious.

Ryan: No one knows what it means. Anyway thank you for joining us. We like to have fun on this podcast. If you wanna support us, become part of the Fierce Fellowship, go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. That's one of the main reasons, one of the main ways God has seen fit to provide for our family. About half, maybe a little under half of our monthly kind of income comes from that. Just people saying, yes, keep doing what you're doing. And lemme tell you, it's working. It's helping.

Selena: So, thank you.

Ryan: And if you can't hear it, I have to say this, otherwise it'll bother me. I'm a little stuffy right now. I'm coming off of some sort of viral thing.

Selena: He's, every morning, you know, "I think I'm better" [both laughs]. The last like five days he is like, "I'm better. I think today's the day. I think today's the day." I'm like, "You've been saying that. Just let it ride. There's no pressure here." Just do what you gotta do.

Ryan: Just go to work, and I do my job. I do my stuff, I take care of my family.

Selena: And then I collapse. [laughs]

Ryan: Then about three o'clock, I'm like, "Oh, no." [laughs]

- Selena:** Exactly.
- Ryan:** So this is actually after three o'clock. So I think this is proof in the pudding right now.
- Selena:** I think you took some medicine. But anyways.
- Ryan:** I did not.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** Why do you lie? Liar. [Selena laughs] I'm medicine-free.
- Selena:** Medicine free.
- Ryan:** I'm drug-free.
- Selena:** Well, I take it back then. So our hope today, I think, for this episode is that we provide you with kind of a basic biblical foundation for why God created sex, what are the purposes of sex within marriage, and are there reasons why we aren't actually stepping into those purposes? So kind of a little bit of a self-examination, you know, what are some of the... I don't wanna say weaknesses, but maybe fears and maybe just tendencies that would keep us away from actually fulfilling the purposes fully, you know, to God's glory and to the goodness of us and our marriage. Are we gonna dive into this or do you wanna talk about other things?
- Ryan:** Well, I wanna dive into it, but let's talk about the purpose thing real quick because an analogy comes to mind. I love analogies.
- Selena:** You love analogies. They're great.
- Ryan:** A little while back we rented a skid steer to move some... if you know you know. Those things are pretty cool. They're like dual track type of thing. And I was moving around, so we had some gravel delivered, put it down in our... we had some potholes developing in our driveway. That was the one day that year it snowed. Do you remember that?
- Selena:** Yeah. It was in, like, the end of March. [laughs]
- Ryan:** And it was like freezing snow in the northwest. Not normal. So I'm running this thing around, and that thing has many purposes, right? One of the purposes is it just goes, it carries stuff.

- Selena:** Yes. It's heavy and strong.
- Ryan:** But you realize it can also flatten, it can also move dirt. It can do all sorts of things.
- Selena:** And level stuff.
- Ryan:** You'll be missing out on the power of all that it is to be a skid steer or to run a skid steer. So marriage and sex are full of these purposes that so many times we just are used to running in our kind of what we're used to doing. The easiest aspects operations, if you will, that we miss out. And you're not as fruitful as you could be-
- Selena:** Well, and I wouldn't just say even the easiest, I think just our tendencies, right? We go to each other for certain reasons, but I think, you know, when you had that conversation with our friend about how sex can be something of like a comfort, which we'll talk about in a little bit, that was kind of mind-boggling. And that was also like a blessing to know that, Oh, wow, there's another purpose that I didn't realize, that I wouldn't have thought of that is not my natural tendency. But it's here, and now I can step into this and experience this together. So yes, I agree. You get a skid steer, you just wanna drive it as fast as you can, straight and level some things, but there's also other purposes that it can serve.
- Ryan:** Right. And even get different attachments. And you can-
- Selena:** Oh dear.
- Ryan:** This is getting very weird.
- Selena:** This is breaking down. [laughs] This is-
- Ryan:** I was gonna say, yeah. There's things that I... yeah.
- Selena:** It's always difficult to talk about sex and not have all the jokes.
- Ryan:** All the connotations. So let's be adults. Right? Grow up.
- Selena:** Grow up.
- Ryan:** Grow up, right? And Godliness. This is good stuff. Okay, you wanna jump right to the purposes themselves, or do you wanna go back to the hope for the conversation here?

Selena: We hope that it provides you with a basic biblical foundation, I think, like I said. So the first one that seems very obvious, and I think as Christians, you know, we step into that on our wedding day is just the procreation, right? The fulfillment of the cultural mandate. In Genesis, God says, go be fruitful, multiply-

Ryan: Fill the earth and subdue it.

Selena: ...fill the earth and subdue it. I'm like, where's take dominion. Fill the earth. Depends on translation, right? So sex clearly facilitates fruitfulness of people. [laughs]

Ryan: Right. You have kids. Sex is the only way that we can procreate and have children. So clearly that is one of the purposes. And I think that's on the obvious side of the purposes of sex. Actually don't be surprised. It's not really on the obvious side these days.

Selena: I was like, well...

Ryan: It's like everybody wants all the sex without any of the fruitfulness of it. That's a whole nother different conversation.

Selena: It's another episode or two.

Ryan: We're happy to talk about it. Just don't have time here to do that. Another one is, sex is a gift. Now, what do you mean by that? Do you mean that it is-

Selena: It's a gift to be enjoyed versus a duty more. I think it is a duty. I think it also is a gift. But I think sometimes our tendencies, again, can weigh heavily into one or the other, which can, I think keep us from stepping into the various purposes with both feet and experiencing the goodness that God has for us.

Ryan: I think this is an obvious one. And here's why. Because everybody wants sex because it is good. They want to go out and have the good aspects of it. The sense of, in some way, connecting with another human being, the physical pleasure of it, the fun and joy and all the things that come along with the activity itself, but they want none of the responsibilities.

So I think it's very obvious that it's good, but what you're saying is different from the worldly perspective, which is good in that it's a gift to be stewarded. Like if you had a nice house and you say, "I'm gonna give you this wonderful house,"... But that's the equivalent of using it... Are you using that house as a residence or as an Airbnb? Are you gonna go in there and just party for a few

days and leave and trash it and leave, you know? They'll find you on Airbnb, but [laughs] pretend like they wouldn't. You know what I'm saying?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: So it's a gift that's been given to you to be stewarded, to be lived in fully, to be cared for and not neglected, and not trashed and not, you know, let-

Selena: Mishandled.

Ryan: Mishandled. Yeah. So, number one of the purposes of sex is fruitfulness. Number two: it is a gift to be enjoyed. Number three, we're gonna spend a lot of time here, dominion. Selena and I were talking before this, and this was an idea that kind of sprung to your mind and I'm really curious to flesh it out here. What do you mean that the purpose of sex is dominion?

Selena: It's practicing and exercising dominion in our marriage. So as we live out those roles of head and helper, husband and wife, like even with insects, we're exercising the dominion that God gave us within our marriage covenant. Interestingly enough, godly dominion also requires submission. So submission by both of us, first to the Lord. And then the husband is called in Ephesians 5, to love his wife and to give himself up for her. And the wife is called to submit and respect her husband as the loving head of the household that God has placed over her. So she's to respect him.

Sex is a consistent way in which we obey God, and we live out that purpose that He's given us thus furthering and fulfilling and making sure dominion for his kingdom is happening on earth. We were talking about it. When we're connected, when our intimacy is, you know, on par and it's been consistent and, we feel like-

Ryan: On target, you mean?

Selena: On target. Yeah. You feel like you're furthering the kingdom of God, right? You're working to-

Ryan: Someone's gotta do it. Someone's gotta do the work.

Selena: It's going to bar now. [laughs] "Dominion" just was the word I think that came to my mind because Yeah, you're, you're actively connecting with one another on every level. We said it's multidimensional.

Ryan: Especially when... if you don't feel like connecting and you say to yourself, you say to your spouse, this is an activity God is called good, it is healthy for us to

do, we're gonna fight for it even though I don't feel like it for whatever reason, whether there's emotional blockage or you're tired, things like that.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: But when you look at each other and say, we are going to do this for the good of our marriage because we recognize it as the good gift it is, that I think is taking dominion. In our pre-talk, as we were preparing for this, this thought came to mind, that every time a Christian couple has sex, it is another blow of the battering ram on the gates of hell.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: That you are saying to the enemy, we are doing this thing that you've tried so hard to pervert. I'm not going anywhere else for it. I'm not looking anywhere. I'm not being satisfied by any other woman. I'm not wanting or desiring any other woman. But instead in the devil's face we're doing this good thing in this right place at this right time with the right person. And we're gonna enjoy it-

Selena: For the right reasons.

Ryan: ...in your face. Now, granted, he's not invited into the marriage. But that's in your face.

Selena: That's dominion.

Ryan: And we are doing it to the glory of God. Every time you, you're taking a stand for what is good, beautiful, and true in the context of marriage, in your own marriage.

Selena: Amen. Amen. And we see this in Genesis 1:26-28. "Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created them, male and female he created them, and God bless them, and said to them, 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

I know that dominion is being directly correlated to animals, you know, stewarding the things of-

Ryan: I'm gonna get you outta this one because-

Selena: Every living thing. [laughs] Just kidding.

Ryan: No, but because... okay, think about who we are as people, who we are as people made in the image of God, the assignment that He's given us it is to subdue the earth to take de... It is not just something we do. It is who we are as people.

Selena: Right. And we can-

Ryan: To take dominion.

Selena: We do that better, would you argue?

Ryan: Like how?

Selena: If when we're connected, when our intimate life is flourishing?

Ryan: I mean, if you're a married couple, absolutely. If you're a single man, Paul makes a case that you might, you know... But the point is, is that we... anything that we do that is in conformity with the will and decree of God, and we do it unto the glory of God, not unto our own glory, our own selfishness, we are in some sense acting out as we should always have been acting out the idea of taking dominion.

Now you have to kind of take what we're saying and... I don't wanna read that in the text, but I think it is there in the sense that we are just doing what we were called to do because of who we are as people made, created in the image of God.

Selena: Amen. Number three: dominion. Alright, [laughs]. Number four: unity. We get back to some of the more obvious ones, but let's talk about it anyway. Unity, oneness, becoming one flesh. We are not two people. Well, we are not just two people. We are individuals, but we have become one flesh. You have become one flesh with your spouse in marriage and by consummating. We talked about this in the past and we got a little bit of pushback, but we've answered those questions. The idea that every time that you are connecting, having sex as a couple, you are... what did I say?

Selena: Renewing your covenant.

Ryan: You're renewing your covenant. Now, that's not to say your covenant's broken, like the covenant's still there. Really, you're reminding yourselves of this covenant. It's like you're re-celebrating it.

Selena: Right. And one of the purposes of, again, having sex and, and how sex unifies you is that it cuts you off from drifting apart. Right? I know that seems obvious, but we're like unity, yes, oneness. Well, what is our default, though, without this? What is our default when we're not connected, when we're not fighting to remain close and fighting for a consistent, intimate life? It's gonna be drifting. We're gonna drift on every level. Spiritually from each other. We'll drift physically when again... and there's just-

Ryan: Which actually I wanna go to the next one.

Selena: Yeah, go ahead.

Ryan: The last one in your list, but I'm gonna move it up is protection. I loved how you said that.

Selena: Not to use protection. No, I'm kidding. [laughs] That's a whole nother conversation.

Ryan: We're happy to have that one too later. [both laughs] Whenever we are... how did you say it? We don't naturally drift toward unity, we drift toward isolation.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: I recognize one of the purposes of sex is to keep us unified. I think one of the secondary effects of that, and one of the purposes we're talking about today is that it gives you protection and... Not protection in the contraceptive sense-

Selena: That's another episode. You can find it.

Ryan: ...but really in terms of temptation. We see this in scripture in 1 Corinthians 7:5. We read in the past. "Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a limited time." Two things there: by agreement and for a limited time. It's not indefinite. "...that you may devote yourself to prayer, but then come together again." Why? "So that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

So it's a sin to withhold sex from your spouse. Now, if you can't bring yourself to do it, friends, that's bubbling up to the surface. The issue's deeper than this then. Right?

Selena: Right. Absolutely.

Ryan: So this is not us saying just grin and bear it and make it happen. Our encouragement for you is to see it for what it is, as the warning light on the dash that it is. Talk to a pastor, talk to each other. Consult scripture. Repent of sin if it's there. You know, if you're hurting, these things could be hard conversations to have, but that's the only way through the pain.

Selena: Well, and they're worth fighting for. There's promises on the other side. There's blessings to be had on the other side. Like God is not abandoning you to just this fight of never finding reconciliation, never finding joy. There are promises on the other side there.

Ryan: We received a question today from a woman who her husband doesn't desire her. She has tried to talk about it, tried to reconcile with him, but he doesn't seem to be coming to the table. And her concern is, her primary concern in that is that for whatever reason, she blames herself for whatever reason, or he has articulated that he thinks it's her fault. We don't know this couple. So it's hard to say what's going on.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: But she's concerned that he's gonna go elsewhere.

Selena: Sure. Absolutely. That's very valid concern.

Ryan: This is exactly the need that she's... this is the purpose of sex that she's desiring to fulfill is the unity, but then the protection from-

Selena: Protection from temptation, from-

Ryan: Temptation from going elsewhere. How many stories have you heard where somebody's lonely, they're not getting the affection, the attention, the love that they desire at home, or at least they think they deserve and so they start finding all the little comments from coworkers, very attractive or all of a sudden, you know, Joe-

Selena: The attention.

Ryan: ...from accounting is a very... he's a gentleman. He speaks to me with respect. And, you know, pretty soon that protection is not there because you're not-

Selena: Your guards are let down. Your guard's let down.

Ryan: Yeah.

Selena: So, which kind of leads us nicely into the next point of sex, one of the purposes is that it is exclusive. And I know that seems obvious, right? But it's something that should not be shared with anyone else. We say this over and over again. But why? What's the purpose of not sharing it with someone else?

Well, the type of relationship that can hold, I think the depth and... I don't wanna say heaviness, but like the weight I guess of this type of interaction is only the marriage covenant. Like, that's how God designed it. And so the exclusivity speaks to that weight, that holiness, that purpose that God has for sex. It's not to be shared with anyone else. No screens, no anything else. It was designed by God to be between one man, one husband, one woman, one wife for life.

Selena: Again, there's a depth, there's a familiarity there's a bond that's cultivated in this act over and over and over again. It's the unifying of two souls. It can only be experienced and fully realized within the marriage. And that marriage covenant is the only thing that can hold the weight of this type of interaction again and the bonding that happens there. So Hebrews 13:4, "Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

Ryan: I wanna make sure that we connect that passage to what we just said, the exclusivity of it.

Selena: Sorry. Yes.

Ryan: Some couples will ask us, "Well, is it okay to watch pornography as long as we both agree to it?"

Selena: Nope.

Ryan: "And that we're both okay with it?"

Selena: No.

Ryan: The answer is no. I don't know. Our culture is obsessed with this idea of mutual consent being the ultimate moral indicator of something.

Selena: Yeah. If we're an agreement on it-

Ryan: Just because you want to do it doesn't mean-

Selena: It's the right thing. Hundred percent. So it's like my 3-year-old wants to eat cookies all day. Well, just because she wants to do it and maybe her friend agrees with her doesn't mean that it's right. [laughs]

Ryan: By no means do we mean to say that someone consenting to an activity doesn't matter. But we're saying that is not the moral-

Selena: No

Ryan: ...boundary.

Selena: God's word is our-

Ryan: Right. Us thinking something's okay together does not make that thing okay.

Selena: A hundred percent.

Ryan: Because well, that's a downward spiral of mutual sin, right?

Selena: And that's called codependency. And that's how you could follow it down all sorts of crevasses that way. So what do we mean by... so pornography together, that's someone else via image and sound is coming into your marriage bed? You're defiling it.

Sex toys that are modeled and shaped after human organs. That's shaped after someone and embellished by computers probably and then... whatever, how they make those things. That's bringing something else... Someone else sin. Not something. Someone else.

I'm due for a conversation with a listener. He's actually become a friend — Christopher, if you're listening to this, hello — about the nature of AI and generative pornography and how AI is already... like it's already happening. And what are the moral implications for a godly woman, a godly husband, for an image that is not a person, right? It's not a person.

Selena: But it came from a person. Oh-

Ryan: It's modeled after a person.

Selena: It's modeled after. Yeah.

Ryan: So it's pretty simple conversation, but it's also... when you dig under the surface, it starts to get interesting from me. Maybe we won't do that here.

Maybe's somewhere else... Philosophically it's very interesting. Anyway. So that's number six.

Number seven is our enjoyment. So we talked about that upfront. Sex is a gift was number two. But this is enjoyment. I think-

Selena: Well, people can view it as more of a duty. There are, I think, people that sit to one side of, like, marriage is just a duty to fulfill. It's a way to have kids and that's kind of it.

Ryan: Sex and duty.

Selena: Sex is a duty. So, again, this answers the other question of that, or it goes along with the fact that marriage is a gift. It's a blessing. Read the Song of Songs, Song of Solomon, right, you'll see the enjoyment that two people... oh, husband, wife had for one another. It's not wrong, I think, to seek enjoyment. But again, if that's the only thing that you're seeking, right? The pure like-

Ryan: It's one-sided.

Selena: If it's one-sided, if you aren't having those awkward conversations with each other on a regular basis, if you're not connecting and talking about your sex life, and it's just one person dictating and there's not this mutual conversation happening, then that's wrong. You know, there needs to be a mutual enjoyment, mutual edification for both people.

Ryan: Yeah. And that being the case, have fun. We really have fun. Our good father gave this as an enjoyable thing. Again, with the analogies, if you buy your children one of those big toys that we are not gonna get- [Selena laughs]

Selena: That's fine.

Ryan: But one of those big toys, you put it up in your backyard, and like, what is gonna make you happy is if they're playing on the thing. But there's monkey bars, there's a slide, there's a little fort thing, there's a little climbing wall. Like, I don't care what you do, just stay in the playground, stay in the backyard.

Selena: Yeah, that's right.

Ryan: And play on the thing. Like, enjoy it for what it is. That's what our good Father, I think, takes joy in seeing His children enjoy this good gift He's given.

Next one. This one is a little more, I'll say, esoteric, but it's very core to what we're trying to accomplish here is sex is a gospel reminder. Now, there's this

movement of the last 10 years where everything is gospel-centered. Gospel-centered this, gospel-centered that. We have gospel-centered marriage, we have the online course. And that can kind of be quickly misunderstood. So what we mean by this is that it is a reminder that we are sinners, we are imperfect, and that we are naked in our sin before all-knowing God.

Selena: Yes. Yes.

Ryan: But still what does God do in Christ? What does he give us? His love. His salvation.

Selena: His pardon.

Ryan: His attention. He gives us His pardon. So when we are naked married people doing married people things, that's a reminder that, oh, we're aging... You know, I'm not as fit as I once was. Y

Selena: But you're as good as you ever were. want. Yeah, no, it's a good reminder, I think.

Ryan: And yet, my spouse, my wife still loves me. Still accepts me. Still gives her love to me, still receives my love freely.

Selena: You know, me the best physically, spiritually, emotionally, everything and you still love me the most. Which is such a reflection of God's love for us through Christ.

Ryan: And we must not take that for granted.

Selena: Must not take that for granted.

Ryan: That's something as Christians I think we do take for granted that when both of you are in Christ, and you are living life before the face of God, in the light of God's grace, you take for granted the fact that, Wow, what a miracle that we love each other genuinely. And I think sex is a reminder of that miracle.

Selena: Right. And Proverbs is full of verses about, you know, a man's ways are before the Lord's eyes, right? He sees, he ponders all his paths. Like we are not hidden from God. Our motivation's not hidden. Who we are, our desires, everything is laid out bare before Him. Again, thank you, God, for sex. Thank you for the reminder that it is of the gospel. Again, God is so good in how He creates things to have multi purposes. It sounds so funny. Multipurpose.

Ryan: Multiple purposes.

Selena: Multiple purposes.

Ryan: Amen. The final one that we'll cover today is comfort. Sex is a comforting act. It is something where if you are mourning or you are feeling... I've had a couple bad weeks-

Selena: Kind of bummed out.

Ryan: ...for various reasons — my cushy office life [both laughs] — where I have just been like, man, I just feel a little bit crushed. I know that God is good.

Selena: You know the truths.

Ryan: I'm not lost my hope, but you just feel crushed. And so I go to Selena and I'm just like, "I need comfort from you." And it's not just all the comforts. I want all the comforts from you.

Selena: Call me baby. [both laughs]

Ryan: That's a wonderful thing. Is it not? And we see the example, the precedent for this is in Genesis 24:6-7. "Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah. His mother..." Isaac's mother had just died. And he took Rebecca and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Comfort. When's the last time, wife, husband, you've looked at your spouse and said, "I feel crushed because of X, Y, or Z, and I need your comfort right now and I want it in this way." That's okay to say that.

Selena: Yeah. Sex is a familiar place. It ideally is a very safe place for a husband and wife to come together. So there's almost like boundaries around it. The Hebrew verse of like keeping the marriage bed holy. This is the place where all of those things can fall to the wayside, just like your clothes. [Ryan laughs] And you can just come together and enjoy one another and enjoy the gift that God's given you.

Ryan: And be comforted.

Selena: Yes.

Ryan: And by the only person who can comfort you in that way. So our encouragement to you is to embrace these purposes. We wanna give you some tangible ways to apply this. Yeah. So we have an acronym. It's this. Very simple. ACT. A-C-T.

- Selena:** A-C-T.
- Ryan:** If you're trying to grow in this area of your life, right? Number one, here's what you can do. Assess your current sex life. Take an honest inventory. In other words, talk about it.
- Selena:** Talk about what's your frequency, talk about, you know, the quality of the experience and kind of maybe your desires, your spouse's desires.
- Ryan:** Well, last week we talked about doing a check-in and sex is on the list of the things to check-in.
- Selena:** Absolute.
- Ryan:** So this is just that part of the check-in. How are we doing? How am I doing loving you in the bedroom? I'm not just coming to you and saying, "You don't love me." Well, yeah. But instead we are assessing it together with the common goal that we want to make it better.
- Selena:** Right. So good.
- Ryan:** And then number two-
- Selena:** So A is assess, C is communicate.
- Ryan:** This is kinda the same thing. [both laughs] But this is the unique take on it as you're talking about it, assessing it beforehand-
- Selena:** I would assess it like on your own. So make this a conscious effort. Like, okay, we're gonna talk about this. I want you to assess our sex life. I'm gonna assess it. And then we're gonna communicate it and have a conversation. I would probably change that to conversation about it.
- Ryan:** But then that doesn't work on the acronym side.
- Selena:** It does conversation. Instead of communicate.
- Ryan:** Okay. C is conversation then. So it's having that conversation before, but also after and even during. That's okay.
- Selena:** It's okay. You can talk.
- Ryan:** How, how are things going? Are you good? Like, it doesn't have to be some a silent endeavor. You can still communicate. Like, do it. And then the final one

T is try. It's a call to keep fighting the good fight that, so even if you feel like you're up against a wall and you've tried and tried and tried we're saying try again. Do so prayerfully. Do so after you've assessed and communicated. You've gone on the same page about this. Don't stop learning. Be willing. Be willing to give and receive love in ways that you might not feel 100% comfortable with.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: Take risks for one another. And start to... re-start to rebuild trust and by the grace of God, that trust will be rebuilt. And of course, this always goes without saying, but I have to say it, don't re-break the trust.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Don't pick off the scab. Let it heal. Yeah. A lot of couples, they don't let it heal. They start the healing process, then they reinjure themselves. So you gotta stick to the course. So that you're marriage to Christ.

That being said, if you've made it this far, clearly you care about this topic. But this is the, the big, big caveat is that none of this makes sense outside of the saving grace of our good God. And we see that saving grace through the person of Christ who is God, who became flesh. He was born on Christmas day. That's what we celebrate. He lived a perfect life. He died the sinner's death on Good Friday. That's what we celebrate on... We kind of celebrate it. But what it means on Good Friday is that He's dying. Why? On our behalf so that I don't have to die the sinner's death.

But did he stay dead? No. What? Easter Sunday, He rose from the grave and now He sits at the right hand of the Father reigning and ruling to this day as our good savior. And we place our faith in Him. We say, God you are God, I am not. Jesus you are holy, I am not. I need your grace over my life because I cannot save myself.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: I need you to pull me out of... Dead men don't reach. I can't reach and grab you. I'm dead in my sin. You have to reach down and grab me. Please do so. And I believe that's what it means to be saved. So none of this makes sense unless you understand the love of Christ the love of God in Christ. And we want you to be a Christian.

So to that end, we have three recommendations. One, you find a friend who's a Christian and say, talk to me about Jesus. We read the Bible together.

Number two, find a church that preaches outta the Bible. If you don't know where a church like that is, we have a website. It's thenewsisgood.com. That's number three. There's some general ideas about what the gospel is, definitions of what the gospel is, but also there's a church finder there by the good people at Ligonier Ministries.

Selena: Nice.

Ryan: It's an awesome church finder. Get into a church, listen to the word, and we pray that that blesses you. And you wanna call you brother and sister in Christ.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Let's pray. Father God, we love You. Thank you for the gift it is of marriage. Thank you. That you have shown us that sex is good and it's good in one place—in marriage. And you've given us within that one single boundary so many joys, so many things, so many purposes to be stepped into, to be experienced and things to accomplish through this gift you've given us.

I pray that you would help couples who are struggling in their marriage in general, couples that are struggling around this idea of intimacy, and they're maybe feeling afraid right now, they're feeling a challenge being placed on them. Lord, I pray that that's a challenge that's from you, not from us, not from them, but from you. I pray that it would bear fruit in their lives and they would as they step forward and responding to that in faith. We pray all these things in your son's name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: Alright. Thank you for joining us for The Fierce Marriage Podcast. Yeah. If you wanna join the Fierce Fellowship, we would love that. Go to fiercemarriage.com/partner. Other than that, we'll see you again in time. I pray that next week I'll be feeling fully better.

Selena: You are.

Ryan: So this episode of The Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: We'll see you again in about seven days. Until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce.

PODCAST NOTES

- **Referenced scripture**
 - Hebrews 13:4
 - 1 Corinthians 7:5
 - Genesis 1:26-28

- **Recommended resource**
 - thenewsisgood.com

FIERCE MARRIAGE RESOURCES

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